

Smith (H. H.)

With Compliments of the Author.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

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OF

WILLIAM L. KNIGHT, M.D.,
EX-PRESIDENT OF THE SOCIETY.

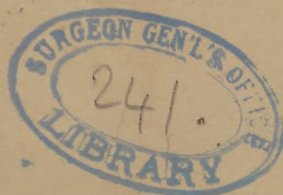
READ BEFORE THE

PHILADELPHIA COUNTY MEDICAL SOCIETY,

October 15, 1877.

BY

HENRY H. SMITH, M.D.,
PRESIDENT OF THE SOCIETY.



PRINTED BY ORDER OF THE
PHILADELPHIA COUNTY MEDICAL SOCIETY.

PHILADELPHIA:
COLLINS, PRINTER, 705 JAYNE STREET.
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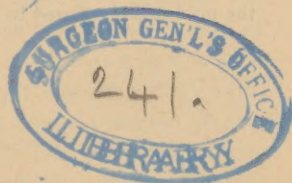
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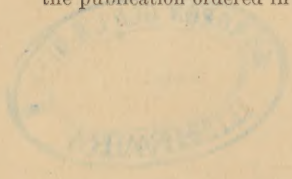
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At a meeting of the Philadelphia County Medical Society held October 15, 1877, "on motion of Dr. ATKINSON this Biography was referred to the State Medical Society, and two hundred and fifty additional copies ordered to be printed for distribution and the use of the author.

H. LEAMAN,

Recording Secretary Phila. Co. Med. Soc."

Owing to the necessity of first forwarding this Biography to the State Society, the publication ordered in the above Resolution has consequently been delayed.



BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

OF

WILLIAM L. KNIGHT, M.D.,

OF PHILADELPHIA.

THE custom of commemorating, in some form, the death of one who has impressed his fellows by his virtues or his actions, is of very ancient date, and its continuance at present is not only evidence of its propriety, but of its filling a want that the mind of every person admits to exist.

Among the ancients, each of the acquaintances of the deceased is said to have dropped a stone upon a spot consecrated to his memory, and thus, in proportion to the tributes made by friends, there was erected a monument that recalled to each traveller that in that place reposed the remains of one whom many had delighted to honor. In accordance with this natural feeling, biography has always offered much that was attractive; enchaining the heart of the reader with irresistible interest, whilst furnishing instruction to every diversity of condition. Biography, it has been truly said, not only exhibits the human character in every possible phase, whether in the bustle and contests of public life, or in the retirement of domestic privacy, but also shows how all, whether humble or distinguished, have been liable to the same misfortunes, sustained the same trials, and only differed in the traits of character that enabled them to overcome, or led them to succumb in the contests of a checkered life. In this manner biography, like history, "teaches by its example."

In reading the biographies of eminent men, whether of war or peace, their histories naturally excite our highest admiration, although it is apt to make us feel that we cannot in any way equal them; but when biography portrays the mental and physical traits, as well as the daily trials of one whose more humble position and struggles in life are similar to those with which most of us are surrounded, it gains in interest and proves especially instructive

to those who, at the commencement of their career, are apt to be disheartened by the obstacles that retard their desired success.

In offering, in obedience to a resolution of this Society, a short history illustrative of the character of one of our former Presidents, I hope rather to instruct by the study of his professional example and his private virtues, than dazzle or attract attention by any coloring of a character that, like the trailing *Arbutus* in its early spring, possesses beauty and fragrance, but lies so low among the leaves of the forest that it needs to be sought for, as it is liable to bloom unseen by the rapid traveller over life's rugged path.

Dr. WILLIAM LAMBDIN KNIGHT was born near Wheeling, Virginia, on February 23d, 1811. His father lived on a farm, and, owing to the death of all his family, but little is known of his history, except that he was an active soldier in our war for independence, a fact the influence of which greatly controlled the position of his grandsons during the late war, in which they bared their breasts to maintain the Union. Dr. Knight passed his early youth upon his father's farm, helping to support the family of a sister and three brothers by his manual labor. "His opportunities for obtaining a literary education were exceedingly limited, being confined to a short season of instruction in the winter months, when the old log school-house was occupied by the travelling school-master." In this respect, his means of education corresponded with that of several distinguished members of our profession, whose natural force of character and persistent efforts at self-development, eventually made them not only useful, but eminent, practitioners; thus Dr. Drake, who was so widely known, spent the first fifteen years of his life in such labors as the exigencies of his family demanded, working upon a farm, tilling the soil, attending the cattle, and clearing the forest; whilst he went, from November to March, to the country school two miles distant from his father's cabin, to be taught reading, writing, and ciphering as far as the rule of three, beyond which few of the teachers were able to go.¹

Dr. Charles Caldwell, of Kentucky, also had no instruction at school until he had completed his ninth year, when he was sent to a log school-house three miles off, along a slight and devious cow-path, through a deep and tangled forest infested by wolves, wild cats, and snakes, the latter being an especial object of dread to him, as he incidentally trod barefooted, or only with moccasins, what was to him the road to learning.² How many of our city children

¹ Biography of Daniel Drake, by S. D. Gross, M.D.

² Autobiography of Charles Caldwell, M.D.

at the present day would be supposed by their anxious parents to be able to live through any such exposure? Now, India-rubber overshoes, heavy overcoats, furnace-heated houses, and the other injurious evidences of a so-called civilization, have supplanted the rugged habits gained by boys in country life, and, as a result, we present society with a race of men as delicate physically as they are feeble and wanting in self-reliance mentally.

Dr. Knight's mother is described as a most estimable Christian woman, who, by her precepts and example, early laid the foundation of his moral character; the fruit of such seed being harvested by him and extended to the family that in his manhood encircled his own hearth. At the age of eighteen, Dr. Knight lost his father, and the family removed to Newark, Licking County, Ohio. At this place he entered as clerk in the apothecary shop of Dr. Wilson, where his studious and industrious habits gained for him the esteem of his employer, and his assistance in obtaining a more extended education. His progress in this was so satisfactory, that in 1834, being then twenty-three years of age, he came to Philadelphia to obtain medical instruction. In order to aid in his support and pay for this instruction, he entered the Philadelphia Dispensary, on Fifth Street, as Resident Student, and, under the direction of his preceptor, Dr. Samuel McClellan, commenced in November, 1834, to attend the lectures of the Jefferson Medical College. At this period, the writer first knew him, and now recalls the habits of that time as illustrative of medical and social progress in Philadelphia since that period.

At the Dispensary it was then the custom for the resident student to extract teeth and bleed all who called for such operations, and many a molar was jerked from the patient's head across the floor, by means of the then favorite instrument known as the "key." Obstetrical cases were also not then part of the regular practice of the house, and Dr. Knight and the writer not unfrequently took charge of all who sought assistance in this way; the strong health and regular labor of this class of patients not requiring any great amount of skill on the part of the youthful medical attendant. One year the number of cases thus attended exceeded one hundred and twenty, and they aided in the acquisition of that skill as an obstetrician, for which Dr. Knight was ultimately known. Subsequently, "The Nurses' Home" was established, and there was created an obstetrical department of the Philadelphia Dispensary, under the charge of Dr. Joseph Warrington and others. Even at this time Dr. Knight was remarkable for the quiet dignity of his deportment.

The Jefferson College at this period of its career was of but few

years' growth, and the prejudice and animosity excited among many in the profession, by the creation of a rival to the "old school," had by no means disappeared, the medical quarrels of the day exercising an influence even upon the students of the two schools, that was occasionally apparent when then met. Many of the University boys looked with contempt on the poverty-stricken students of the up-start college, and it was not an unfrequent occurrence, for a dozen University men, when they saw a "Jeff. student" near the end of a bench in the old rotunda of the Pennsylvania Hospital, on the occasion of an operation, by Rhea Barton, to move in a line upon the bench until they pushed him off, and compelled him to stand. Dr. Knight, however, was not thus treated, the impudent assumption of superiority by the University students of that day recognizing in him traits that they regarded as making him worthy of their condescending notice. Such were some of the pranks of student life during the year 1834.

In March, 1837, Dr. Knight received his degree of M.D. from his now widely and well-known Alma Mater, which, by its talent and business tact, has been elevated to the first rank in medical education in the United States. His inaugural thesis was on the subject of hydrocephalus, or, as it is now more correctly designated, tubercular meningitis. After graduation, he resigned his position as Resident Student in the Dispensary, and opening an office on Thirteenth Street, west side, near Spruce, he was elected one of the District Physicians of the Dispensary, a post which he continued to fill with great satisfaction, until the end of the period, five years, allotted to each prescriber, when he received from the Managers of the Institution, a handsome silver pitcher, as their recognition of his assiduous devotion to the relief of the sufferings of those entrusted to his care.

During these years he added to his slender income the salary paid him for keeping the books of a commercial house at night. His connection with the Philadelphia Dispensary as student and district physician, although apparently very humble and pecuniarily unprofitable, exercised a marked influence on his subsequent professional success, and became the foundation of the extensive and even lucrative practice that he afterwards obtained; his professional income reaching at one time to the sum of \$7000 per annum, this sum being of more value then than now, though even now it is rarely reached by the majority of the profession.

In 1839, finding his professional success comparatively established, he married Miss Martha Howe Morris, of London, England, an accomplished and cultivated lady of extended family connections,

with whom he became acquainted in Newark, Ohio. His practice and social life continuing to develop, he purchased, in 1844, the property at the northwest corner of Eighteenth and Vine Streets, part of a row of houses then popularly known as "Lloyd's Folly," because located so far from the inhabited portions of Philadelphia. Logan Square was then called "Potter's Field," the graves and a few tombstones being apparent through the paling fence that imperfectly surrounded it. His untiring industry and devotion to his profession continuing to augment his means, he purchased the five lots in the rear of his residence, and erected thereon several four-story houses. The successful result of this investment led him, in 1857, a period of great commercial depression, into another attempt to build a row of houses on Coates Street near Nineteenth, which resulted most disastrously, entailing a loss of nearly \$50,000, and crippling him financially for the rest of his life; another illustration of the truth of the proverb as derived from Appelles, "*Ne sutor supra crepidam.*"

In 1862 he lost, by consumption, his dearly loved wife, who had borne him two daughters and three sons, and three months subsequently he lost his elder and lovely daughter. Depressed by these deaths, and by the absence and exposure in battle of his sons during the Rebellion, he alone found solace in the constant occupation of his mind by devoted attention to his practice, and by the consolation of that religious education received in youth from his mother, and cultivated in after life by his own firm convictions of moral duty.

In 1870 he married Miss Harriet Louisa South, only daughter of George W. South, a well-known citizen of Philadelphia, who now outlives him. This union proved a most happy one, the intellectual and religious cultivation of his wife contributing greatly to his temporal and spiritual comfort. Dr. Knight frequently alluded to his happiness in this union, and to the fact that he and his wife made it a practice to read each day a chapter in the Bible, morning and evening, and that he had thus, in seven years, read the Bible through and through many times.

During a greater part of his medical life, Dr. Knight attended to his extensive practice on foot, even at the time when street cars were at every corner, to contribute, as he thought, to the indolent habits of those who were too lazy to walk; a result not by any means imaginary, it being well known that when our city volunteers were, by the exigencies of service, required to march a few miles, dozens of them broke down and became foot-sore under exercise that a farmer following the plow would regard as a medium day's labor.

In 1875, Dr. Knight first began to exhibit evidence of the development of the disease which eventually caused his death, and he began to complain of vesical distress, with excruciating dorsal pain, which greatly interfered with his activity. Notwithstanding the urgent requests of his medical friends that he would save his strength, he continued to perform his usual duties, often losing at the bedside of a patient the night's rest that was so necessary to his existence, and continuing even through the winter's storms to tread from house to house of the sick and suffering; many of whom were only the recipients of his professional charity, thus furnishing an example of self-sacrifice and conscientious devotion to duty for the benefit of others that is rarely seen.

In the latter days of his illness, he often spoke of his attendance on the poor, as affording him great consolation in the reflection that during a very long and active practice, "he had, literally, never turned his face from any poor man." Indeed, throughout his life, he was greatly interested in the welfare of those whose lot seemed to have been cast in hard places, and he frequently remarked to his family, "that the deep gratitude of the poor for his little attentions and services gave him an inexpressible pleasure." On one occasion, an old hod-carrier came to the house shortly after his death, and told the family that Dr. Knight had faithfully attended his wife and family for twenty-five years, commencing by an attendance on him one bleak winter, when his toes had been frozen, nursing him faithfully for six weeks, and when he had recovered, and borrowed some money to pay his bill, Dr. Knight refused to receive it, saying, "Never mind that now, Jerry; wait till the summer comes and work is steady, and your family is provided for, and then you can call and pay *me*."

The symptoms arising from an enlarged prostate gland continuing to develop, his sufferings became intense, requiring the constant use of the catheter, which he would himself often pass every half hour, in the hope of obtaining relief.

Notwithstanding the kind and constant attentions of several medical friends, his suffering continued: so renting his house and furniture for a year, about July, 1876, he removed to No. 4043 Sansom Street, West Philadelphia, hoping to regain his health by rest in a locality where he was not liable to the calls of patients, who constantly wished to consult him, even in his sick chamber.

From this time until his death, in May, 1877, he was confined to his bed, emaciating to a most marked degree, suffering intensely day and night, yet bearing all with patient resignation. So great was his agony, that anæsthetics alone made him insensible to them.

During this period, he was also afflicted by the death of his two sons: William, who had been in the Navy, died suddenly of heart disease whilst on a visit to his father, and John Garrison, his second son, who died after a brief illness of pneumonia, at Cincinnati, where he had settled. These bereavements were borne with the same Christian resignation that had always distinguished his character, and although he realized the fact that his stay on earth was very short, he continued cheerful, and often spoke to his devoted wife and only remaining son of his trust in the promises of God and the pleasure which he experienced in contemplating the change from this transitory life of pain, to that which should endure for an eternity of bliss. He frequently alluded to the time when he should rest quietly and unconsciously, in his beautiful lot at Laurel Hill, alongside of the loved ones who had preceded him. Everything that a most faithful and untiring love in a wife could do, by careful nursing, night and day, for weeks and months, was done; but at last, on Thursday, May 31, 1877, he called her to him, and placing her hand upon his heart, ceased to breathe; the smile on his face apparently indicating his recognition of the beatitudes of a future existence.

Thus passed from earth a spirit so free from guile, and so devoted to duty, that we, his former associates, may advantageously pause and study the moral of his life and his many virtues, as he tried to imitate the charity and benevolence depicted in the doctrines of him who is so well designated as the "Great Physician."

In the character of Dr. Knight, as thus briefly and imperfectly sketched, we have an illustration of the firm and solid progress made in a professional career, that commencing, apparently, under the least favorable circumstances financially and socially, ended crowned with honors and success. From the limited education of the country school-house, he, by assiduous effort, chiefly of himself, developed a literary and medical culture that enabled him, though an entire stranger in a large city, to become well and favorably known, and to secure a large share of popular confidence in his abilities and medical skill. Such an example cannot but prove encouraging to the many young men in our profession, whose early struggles are somewhat similar, and seem to be so hopeless of ultimate success. His devotion to practice is shown in the fact that for eighteen years he was never out of the city. Again, his devotion to the poor became an element of success, that constituted him the much esteemed physician of many who would be spoken of as the rich, and whose appreciation of his services created the bulk of that income which proved sufficient for his tastes, and enabled

him to educate and rear in comfort a family, whose training, re-developed the industry and self-reliance that soon made them independent of a father's assistance.

But Dr. Knight's culture was not, by any means, limited to his profession, or to objects connected with it. Although favored by few of the opportunities enjoyed at the present day by those who can cultivate the arts, through the means of travel and artistic teachings, he exhibited a taste and judgment in the selection of paintings that made him the owner of many excellent illustrations, and added to the charms and pleasures of his residence. To music he was also quite devoted, playing, at one period of his life, upon the clarionet, and giving to all his children a somewhat extended musical culture, that resulted in pleasant concerts of performers who were entirely of his own household and their immediate friends. The musical compositions of both classical and modern composers had for him attractions that were often gratified, and helped to lighten the fatigue of a day, or even night, of professional toil.

Dr. Knight was also an ardent admirer of the beautiful and curious in works of sculpture, and he rarely missed an opportunity of being present at sales of collections of art, bric-a-brac, or libraries, and, when his means permitted it, purchased liberally, so that his residence contained quite a collection at the time of his death. In his office were to be seen busts of such characters as he greatly revered, as Hippocrates, Washington, Webster, Milton, Napoleon, etc., with portraits of Sir Harry Slocum, Astruc, Cooper, J. C. Warren, Boërhaave, and Rush. In his hall and stairways were statues of the "Fisher Boy" and "Greek Slave," with Rogers's group of "The Wounded Scout," bust of Heloise, etc. Of his paintings, he placed great value on a large one which he obtained after much searching for it. This picture, of six feet by four, occupied the main wall of his library, and represented the love of Antiochus and the skill and wisdom of Erasistratus, his physician. The subject of the picture, as given in Plutarch's well-known life of Demetrius, is as follows: "Antiochus was violently enamored of the young Stratonice, though she had had a son by his father. Being extremely unhappy, he made the strongest efforts to conquer his passion, but without avail. At last, owing to the violence of his desires, and there being no prospect of his satisfying them, he determined to destroy his life, and feigned sickness. His physician, Erasistratus, easily discovered that his distemper was *love*, but was unable to conjecture who was the object of it. In order to accomplish this, he spent whole days in the sick man's chamber, and whenever any beautiful person of either sex entered it, he

observed carefully, not only the look of Antiochus, but every part and motion of the body, which most perfectly sympathizes with the soul. When others entered, the patient remained entirely unaffected, but when Stratonice came in, as she often did, he exhibited all the symptoms described by Sappho, as 'the faltering voice, the burning blush, the languid eye, the sudden sweat, the tumultuous pulse, until at length, the passion overcoming his spirits, there was a deliquium and mortal paleness.' From these symptoms, Erasistratus concluded that the prince was in love with Stratonice, but intended to carry his secret with him to the grave. Depending on the affection that the king had for his son, he ventured to tell him one day, that the young man's disorder was love, an impracticable, incurable love. 'How, incurable love?' said the king. 'Why,' said Erasistratus, 'he is in love with my wife.' 'What,' said the king, 'would you, who are my friend, refuse to give up your wife to my son, when you see us in danger of losing our only hope?' 'Would you do such a thing?' demanded the physician, 'if he were in love with Stratonice?' 'O my friend,' replied Seleucus, 'how happy should I be, if either God or man could transfer his affections thither. I would give up my kingdom, so I could but keep Antiochus,' and he pronounced these words with so much emotion and profusion of tears, that Erasistratus took him by the hand and said, 'Then there is no need of Erasistratus, you who are a father, husband, and king, will be the best physician.' " This varied subject has been well displayed by the artist, and his illustration of the emotions of youth, as well as the calm judgment and skill of the aged physician, seem to have had great charms for Dr. Knight, who often spoke of the years he had spent in watching for and purchasing this picture. He was especially fond of contemplating the historical traits of Erasistratus, his devoted attendance for whole days at a time in the sick man's chamber that nothing might escape his observation; his careful recognition of the relation of the emotions to the physical disturbances of the corporeal functions; his tact and wisdom in divining the special cause of his disorder, and his strategy in inducing the king to yield to the ardent and unreasonable, as well as immoral, wishes of his son, in order to preserve his life and continue his dynasty; results, the importance of which, this wise court physician recognized as justifying the employment of special means for their acquisition.

Among other paintings collected by Dr. Knight was a large "Madonna," of eight by nine feet, by Carlo Moratti, another large painting of the "Rejection of Hagar," of the "Samaritan Woman at the Fountain asking the Saviour for the Water of Life," and the

Salutation of Elizabeth by the Virgin Mary;" all painted to his order from the celebrated originals in the Dresden and other European galleries.

The personal appearance of Dr. Knight was pleasing and attractive. He was about six feet in stature, well formed, erect, and somewhat military in his carriage, with a high forehead, gray eyes, prominent nose, hair turned back from his forehead, and of a gracious and polished demeanor; presenting all the traits of a benevolent, well-educated gentleman. His smile was attractive and gave evidence of kindness and also humor, the latter being sometimes exhibited in his casual intercourse with patients whom he met. A lady, who had great confidence in his skill, speaking of him, said, "My children miss Dr. Knight almost as much as I do; he was always kind to them and sometimes would pat their heads in the street, and tell them to put out their tongues, and then, with a merry twinkle in his eye, say, 'Run home and tell mother the doctor said you might have some ice-cream,' which they always obtained, as with me his opinion, even in trifles, was law."

In his religious belief he was a member of the Protestant Episcopal Church, and devoted himself and family to attendance on that service under the pastorate of the Rev. Dr. Suddards. But, though firm in his own opinions, he was liberal in his views of the rights of others, and was always popular with priests and ministers of other denominations. His deep reverence for the sincere worshipper of God, under any form of Christian doctrine, gave him a hold upon the affections of his patients in their varied sorrows, which can only be appreciated by those who witnessed the grief of those who called on his family, on hearing of his death. His rule of life appeared to be the full performance of his duty "in that state of life to which it had pleased God to call him," and hence he was seldom absent from his post; but, with that exalted standard of the high calling of his chosen profession, seemed to extract his highest pleasure from a faithful attendance on suffering.

His deportment in the sick-room was uniformly cheerful and encouraging, and, as an old patient of forty years' standing remarked a short time since, "his presence in my room seemed to do as much good as his medicine." His success in obstetrics was justly earned, and his large practice in that line bears evidence of his skill. In consultation with his brother practitioners, Dr. Knight was remarkable for punctuality and decorum, never making a suggestion in treatment merely for the sake of change, and always expressing candidly and fully his reasons for the opinion that he diffidently presented. Though always courteous and very considerate of the

reputation of the attending physician, he was firm in his own opinions, which were generally based on his own practical knowledge, rather than on that given in books. In the treatment of puerperal convulsions, whilst admitting the beneficial effects of anæsthetics, especially before delivery was accomplished, he was also partial to the old practice of venesection. He was very watchful of the patient before labor; regulating diet and directing exercise to be freely taken. If any marked evidence appeared of general œdema, without pretending to explain its origin physiologically, he at once resorted to purgatives and diuretics, and these failing, recommended the moderate letting of blood. He was rather timid in the use of the forceps, and never attempted even a simple surgical operation; although always assisting, with perfect *sang froid*, the surgeon in attendance on his patients.

On a beautiful elevation, in the central portion of Middle Laurel Hill, overlooking a charming view of the winding Schuylkill River, with its hills and forests adding to its varying beauties, there stands a lofty monument, built (from a model made by Dr. Knight) of European marble, triangular in its base, as emblematical of the doctrine of the Holy Trinity. Upon this base rests three broken columns of different heights, illustrative of the varied lengths of the term of life of those whose burial was thus marked. On one side in large letters is the simple name of "Knight," whilst another inscription indicates that here reposed the remains of the beloved wife and two daughters of our late member. Adjacent to this is a simple, newly-sodded mound that shows that with "earth to earth, and ashes to ashes," the corporeal remains of our former President mingle in one common dust, awaiting the realization of that doctrine in which he had so strong a belief, that at the last day "all should be raised, incorruptible, at the sound of the trump; in the twinkling of an eye all should be changed; for this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal put on immortality."

Dr. Knight, though a great reader, wrote but little, and no record has been found of any medical paper written by him, either read before this Society or published in the journals; the knowledge of his opinions in practice, just cited, being from the personal observation of the writer. In his inaugural remarks,¹ as President of this Society, he suggested and strongly urged the members to obtain a hall and

¹ His address, as retiring President, was an eulogy of Dr. Rush, one whose character and professional traits he greatly revered. So great, however, was Dr. Knight's diffidence of his own abilities that he desired no special announcement should be made of his paper, and it was consequently read in the presence of but few of our members at a special meeting of the Society.

establish a library and museum, intending, no doubt, to donate his own collection of over 3000 volumes as a nucleus for this purpose. Among the varied works contained in his collection are to be found some rare copies that would delight a bibliophile. Of these, there is one volume, entitled "*Sphera Mundi*," being essays by Esculani, Lapuani, and others, published by Jacobi Fabri Sapulentis, Venice, 1499, or fifty-nine years after the invention of printing; "*Dictionarium Medicum, vel expositionis vocum medicinalia, ad verbum excerptæ, ex Hippocrates, Aretocus, Galieno*," etc., published by H. Stephon, 1564; a copy of "*Anatomicum Fallopii, De Secretione Humor e Sanguinis, et Solidorum*," etc., by Andrea Vesalii 1564; "*Codex Medicamentarius, seu Pharmacopea Parisiensis*," par Phillippo Harduino, 1645; Nicolai Stenonis, "*de Musculis et Glandulis*," 1664; "*Baptista Mantuamus, Carmelita Theologia*," Antwerp, 1546; and many others, valuable as historical records. The loss of these to this Society is, I think, entirely due to the want of an appropriate hall in which to place them.

He also urged the formation of a fund to assist members of the Society who wished to engage in original work, and who had not the means of publishing anything of value that they might be able to present to the consideration of the Society. Both these plans seemed to have failed for want of interest in them on the part of the members.

Dr. Knight was elected a member of this Society in 1851, and took a deep interest in it, and, indeed, in all associations tending to elevate and increase the dignity and usefulness of the medical profession. He was a delegate from this Society to the State Medical Society in 1856, '59, '60, '61, '62, '64, '67, '68, and '70, and the American Medical Association in 1865, '66, '67, '68, '70, and '71. He was elected Vice-President of this Society in January, 1866, and President in 1869. He also served assiduously as one of the Censors for five years, being a stern supporter of professional etiquette and propriety.

Such was the quiet, unobtrusive life of Dr. Knight, that comparatively few of the great mass of mankind knew of his existence; but of this relatively small number, nearly all recognized and admitted his influence upon their lives and happiness. The material elements of his frame, as has been well said (in an article on the soul and future life),¹ "are scattered in dust and gases; but the moral energy of his character yet continues, and will continue, to

¹ Frederick Harrison, in "*Nineteenth Century*," as quoted in the *Popular Science Monthly*.

exercise a power that is, perhaps, even greater than it would have been during his life; just as the acts of all men are often most influential in a community after the passion and prejudice created by their opposition has passed away." "The true works of Socrates," says the distinguished writer from whom I quote, "and his life, only began with his resplendent death; his true influence beginning when the surging of passion ended."

The power exerted by Shakspeare over successive generations yet continues, and every scholar now enjoys and admits the pleasure and moral influence of his intellect, not only in the land in which he was born, but on every nation and every tongue that is sufficiently cultivated to receive the impressions of his genius. This influence has been so beautifully expressed by a well-known poet,¹ that I quote his description at length:—

"How little fades from earth when sink to rest
The hours and cares that move a great man's breast;
Though naught of all we know the grave may spare,
His life pervades the world's impregnate air.
Though Shakspeare's dust beneath our footsteps lies,
His spirit breathes amid his native skies;
With meaning, won from him, forever glows
Each air that England feels and star it knows;
His whispered words from many a mother's voice
Can make her sleeping child in dreams rejoice;
And gleams from spheres he first conjoined to earth
Are blent with rays of each new morning's birth;
Amid the sights and tales of common things
Leaf, flower, and bird, and wars, and death of kings;
Of shore and sea and nature's daily round
Of life that tills, and tombs that load, the ground,
His visions mingle, swell, command, pace by,
And haunt with living presence, heart and eye;
And tones from him, by other bosoms caught,
Awaken, flush, and stir each mounting thought;
And the long sigh and deep, impassioned thrill
Rouse custom's trance and spur the faltering will.
Above the goodly land, more his than ours,
He sits supreme, enthroned in skyey towers,
And sees the heroic brood of his creation
Teach larger life to his ennobled nation.
O shaping brain! O flashing fancy's hues!
O boundless heart, kept fresh by pity's dews!
O wit humane and blithe! O sense sublime,
In each dull oracle of mantled time.

¹ John Sterling.

Transcendent form of man! in whom we read
 Mankind's whole tale of impulse, thought, and deed,
 Amid the expanse of years beholding thee
 We know how vast *our* world of life *may* be,
 Wherein, perchance with aims as pure as thine,
 Small tasks and strength may be no less divine."

Though we can trace this posthumous power best in the case of great men, it is not confined to them. Not a single act of thought or character ends with itself; "not a single nature in its entirety, but leaves an influence for good or evil;" "as a fact the good prevails, but all acts continue indefinitely in ever-widening circles; every life more or less forms another life, and lives in another life. The worthy gain in power and in range in each generation; and in some infinitesimal degree, the humblest life that ever turned a sod sends a wave—nay, more than a wave—a life, through the ever-growing harmony of human society." "We are not," continues this writer, "inventing an imaginary world, we are only repeating truths. The idea, no doubt, is usually limited to the famous and the great in civilization; but no one who thinks it out carefully can deny that it is true of every member of society in some lesser degree."

That every member of this Association possesses and exercises a beneficial influence upon others is recognized by us all in the existence of the by-law in accordance with which we are assembled at present, and as biography is intended to furnish us with the marked traits of both public and private character, I have endeavored to delineate them with due regard to truth. Professionally, Dr. Knight's influence was mainly shown as the physician at the bedside. His medical skill and judgment were recognized as sound, by both the profession and the public, and though all must regret that his natural diffidence prevented his extending his influence in a wider circle, through the medium of the press, yet was his knowledge not without fruit, as shown by his success as a physician. His life may rather be regarded as furnishing a happy illustration of the elevating and refining influence of the study of medicine, on the associations and duties of private life, than as evidence of a brilliant intellect. Starting under the most disadvantageous circumstances, without money and without friends, he could, at the end of his career, look back with pride on extended professional success, on children trained to be useful members of society, and to the enjoyment of the blessings of married life in a marked degree.

Such a life is certainly possessed of many charms, and in its

¹ Harrison, in the "Nineteenth Century," as quoted by the Popular Science Monthly.

quiet acquisition of a large share of human happiness—though by no means free from serious afflictions and grief—it presents results that are not as happily developed in those whom ambition, and a more extended sphere of action, have given a more prominent position, or attracted a larger share of public attention.

In the life of Dr. Knight we readily recognize the certain result of an unswerving devotion to duty, in every position in which he was placed: as a man, as a physician, as a husband and as a father. Reverencing all that was noble and good, and with unusually high conception of the lofty character of the true physician, he so moulded and conformed his conduct as to keep his *ideal* ever before him; seeking by his meek and unassuming deportment, rather the approbation of God and his own conscience, than the applause or praise of his fellow-men.

In thus imperfectly delineating the professional and moral traits of one of the most unobtrusive yet high-toned members of our Society, I cannot finish the description of his character without again calling your attention to his strongest peculiarity, viz., a marked *reverence* for every person and action that in any way tended to elevate and improve the moral or physical condition of our community. In religion, he worshipped his God and revered his ministers, no matter under what form of sectarian doctrine they taught the great precepts of a divine Christianity. In his profession, he constantly studied and practised the rules of the eminent physicians whose aphorisms and discoveries constitute the basis of our knowledge at the present day. He never forgot that the medicine of to-day was fore-shadowed and largely endowed by the knowledge and skill of the ancients from the time of Hippocrates and Galen, if not from an earlier period among the Egyptians and Assyrians; and he always showed his sense of obligation to them by his estimate of the value of their doctrines.

A firm believer in the medical theory of corporeal “evolution,” he did not hesitate to extend his views to the condition of the soul in the future life, never being willing to admit that the great minds for which he entertained such marked admiration ceased to be useful and passed into unconsciousness, on the death of the corporeal frames that were simply the caskets that held and exhibited the brilliant jewels of their intellects.

Recognizing, as we all do, the origin of human life in the smallest of “germ cells,” he, like others, would trace its development from “the infant mewling and puking in its nurse’s arms,” to the noblest specimen of the full-grown man, erect and god-like in his carriage, and in the image of Him who had created him and breathed into his

nostrils the breath of life, by and through which "man became a living soul." May we not reverently recognize the continued "evolution" of this soul, which, when returned, at the death of the body, "to Him who gave it," does not perish, but continues to extend in the next world that influence for good or for evil for which it was noted in this? May we not believe that this immaterial soul will continue in its celestial existence, to exercise those traits of character that have so favorably impressed all with whom it came in contact in this terrestrial life, and may we not recognize the possibility of such a result, in specially noting how our deceased member exhibited the influence on his own character, as a man and as a physician, of those whose mental and corporeal developments he continued to keep so constantly before him, by surrounding himself with the works of art that I have before alluded to.

In his collection of busts, paintings, and statuary, there was a method indicative of more than the mere pleasing of an æsthetic culture. The subjects in his collection were evidently selected with care and forethought, and in every instance illustrated not only his taste, but also his reverence, I might almost say adoration, of everything noble in religion, or instructive in public or private life, and these he used as a foundation on which to build and form his own character, and then

" So lived, that when the summons came to join
The innumerable caravan which moves
To that mysterious realm where each shall take
His chamber in the silent halls of Death,
He went not, like the quarry-slave at night,
Scourged to his dungeon; but, sustained and soothed
By an unfaltering trust, he approached his grave
Like one who wraps the drapery of his couch
About him, and lies down to pleasant dreams."¹

¹ Bryant's *Thanatopsis*.

